DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 230 943 CS 207 610

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TITLE The Great Color Conversion: The Influence of Research in Advertiser Colorcasting, 1961 to 1967.
PUB DATE Aug 83
NOTE 30p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (66th, Corvallis, OR, August 6-9, 1983).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Advertising; Broadcast Industry; *Color; *Decision Making; History; Interest Research; *Research Utilization; Television; *Television Commercials; *Television Research
IDENTIFIERS *Media History

ABSTRACT

Prior to 1961, the cost and inflexibility of colorcasting commercials and the limited number of color television sets in the United States had deterred advertisers from switching to color commercials. From 1961 to 1967, however, color's popularity grew significantly. It was hypothesized that, because research on television color effectiveness increased prior to and during this period, such research was a primary decision-making factor in the advertiser move to color. To test this hypothesis, memoranda and client newsletters from a diverse group of advertising agencies, advertiser interviews from the trade press, network research reports, and trend and issue perspectives from the business and trade journals were consulted. The findings did not support the hypothesis. The call for color research by industry and advertising agencies heightened and, indeed, led to more research for the purpose of aiding decision making during the period under study. However, when the decision to colorcast was actually made, other criteria were used more often. Specifically, the (1) product's color appeal, (2) color audience composition, (3) agency or advertiser desire for colorcasting experience, (4) competitive parity, and (5) affective dispositions of the advertiser in general all took priority over primary research findings recommending color use in advertising. (A list of color sponsors on NBC from 1956 to 1966 is appended.) (FL)

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Advertising Division

THE GREAT COLOR CONVERSION: THE INFLUENCE OF RESEARCH IN ADVERTISER COLORCASTING, 1961 TO 1967

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Presented to the Advertising Division
Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication
Annual Convention, Oregon State University
Corvallis, Oregon, August 1983

CS 207 610

ABSTRACT

"The Great Color Conversion: The Influence of Research in Advertiser Colorcasting, 1961 to 1967," Tamara S. Breuen, Michigan State University

Prior to 1961, the cost and inflexibility of colorcasting commercials and the low penetration of color television sets had deterred advertisers from switching to color commercials. From 1961 to 1967, however, color's popularity grew and peaked. It is hypothesized that because research on television color effectiveness increased just prior to and during this period as well, that such research was a primary decision-making factor in the advertiser move to color.

The data available shows this not to be the case. The call for color research by industry and agencies heightened and, indeed, more research was undertaken for the purpose of aiding decision making, but when the decision to colorcast was actually made, other criteria were used more often. Specifically, (1) the product's color appeal, (2) the color audience composition, (3) the agency or advertiser desire for colorcasting experience, (4) competitive parity, and (5) the affective dispositions of the advertiser in general, took priority over primary research findings recommending color in advertising.

Television today, as in its early black and white days, has been an advertiser supported communication medium. The dollars spent by advertisers to broadcast their messages nationwide first financed black and white TV programming. The 1953 introduction of the RCA compatible color television[1] offered advertisers exciting new communication opportunities. Conversion to color, however, was expensive for stations, networks and advertisers. Equipping a station to broadcast color in 1967 averaged $350,000[2] and the cost to produce color programming ran high as well. Recouping these expenses could not be justified through added advertiser fees because of the small audience coverages. Without advertisers dollars, networks could not produce enough color to stimulate public incentive to buy color sets.

Throughout the 1950's, only a handful of advertisers ventured into colorcasting. These pioneering corporations, like Hallmark, General Mills and General Motors,[3] had larger budgets to afford the increased production time and money color demanded. Color commercial stock cost ten to forty percent more than comparable non-color supplies; the commercials took two to five weeks longer to produce[4]; and they required painstaking attention to detail unknown in black and white production. The increased cost, schedule inflexibility and the dismal audience figures (under one percent penetration[5]), dampened much supportive response from the advertising industry.

What, then, mobilized the advertisers to become seriously involved in colorcasting from 1961 to 1967? The audience penetration level was still under three percent in 1963,[6] and the added cost and inflexibility remained. Despite these conditions, which had made color unfeasible in the 1950's, advertiser interest awakened. Because an interest in advertising research paralleled this time period, it is hypothesized that advertising research heavily influenced the advertiser decision to colorcast from 1961 to 1967.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND JUSTIFICATION

A search for anything written about color television growth, uncovered no literature addressing the role of research in the growth process. In fact, very little has been written on any aspect of color TV since the days of its introduction when articles merely chronicled developments without speculating why the developments took place.

Daniel E. Garvey wrote a well-substantiated 1980 essay attributing the National Broadcasting Company's (NBC) initiative, cost absorption and continued investment in color to its subsidary relationship to Radio Corporation of America (RCA), who had the original patent on the electronic compatible color system.[7] However, Garvey's research does not extend beyond the question of NBC's involvement to the colorcasting decision of the other two networks or the advertiser.

Much of the contemporary literature of the 1961 to 1967 period acknowledged a circular or, in venacular terms, a chicken-and-the-egg problem with the establishment of color: television set ownership seemed to be geared to the growth of sponsored colorcasting which was largely geared to the growth of set ownership.[8] Whatever or whomever broke the stalemate and sent color spiraling to success is not known. How research affected sponsored colorcasting might add one puzzle piece to that knowledge gap. Such knowledge, should it reveal a better understanding of the past, might also shed light on the present cable introduction which, in 1983, is just beginning a growth trend similar to color's, which began in late 1961.

Ronald Kaatz, in Cable: An Advertiser's Guide to the New Electronic Media, made just this comparison:

> The cost of learning how to use color properly in 1956 was far smaller than it would have been if they waited until years later, when the networks all began to telecast in color. The same holds true with cable.[9]

METHODOLOGY

Time Frame: 1961 to 1967

The six year span from 1961 to 1967 was chosen as a framework because during those years the greatest color television growth occurred. This period's unprecedented activity can be documented with reference to television sales and network and advertiser participation in colorcasting.

Although a color television standard was adopted in 1953 and color TV was predicted to fully penetrate the United States within three years,[9] its success was still hovering on the horizon in 1960. In late 1961, however, a "sense of excitement" permeated the industry, "a feeling that the long color countdown was finally nearing the action stage."[10] Prior to 1961, sales had remained relatively dormant. That color TV set sales doubled between 1961 and 1962 (a 198% increase),[11] indicates that the color breakthrough had begun.

NBC had the perserverance to support color throughout the 1950's. However, the American Broadcasting Corportation (ABC) did not become involved until 1962 and not until the fall of 1965 did either ABC or the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) seriously color their networks.[12] The majority of advertisers, too, waited on the outskirts of color involvement until this period, when they suddenly began coloring commercials frantically. By 1967, set penetration was estimated over nine million,[13] all three networks broadcast color predominantly,[14] and seventy-five to one hundred percent of all agency TV billings were for color.[15]

> From the sponsor's point of view, this progress indicates that how the breakthrough comes (was) important if not more important, than when it comes. If all Americans marched out en masse tomorrow and bought color sets, the sponsor's problem would be merely one of conversion. If the breakthrough (was) to take the form of an upward, accelerating trend which levels off someplace short of 100 percent color set ownership, then the use of color TV over the next five years (would) involve media decisions at the level of today's choice between radio and TV or print and outdoor. In fact, the sponsor himself, through these decisions may do as much as anyone to determine when the breakthrough comes.[16]

This was the decision-making the advertiser faced during the early breakthrough period. Before 1961, there was no decision to make since color still was not a reality. In 1961 and 1962, color looked promising for the near future due to set sales, but how near was still uncertain. ABC tentatively inserted token color on their network in anticipation, and a few advertisers began to switch over to color. However, with network programming partially monochrome and partially color, and with no consensus of color's longterm viability, the decision of whether to produce commercials in color was difficult. In 1967, after the industry had turned the tide and was going all color, the decision-making was over. The only possible course of action then was a conversion process forced upon the laggards by the all-color networks and the increasing audience demand.

Since the role of advertising research in this decision process is being highlighted, studies used by the advertisers to make their decisions, but which may have predated the 1961 to 1967 period, are by necessity referenced and discussed. It should be noted that the intent is not to pinpoint a cause and effect relationship, but to unentangle the role of research as perceived by the industry at the time and as viewed from the objective perspective of hindsight.

Definitions

Any study quantifying the positive or negative impact, effectiveness or audience popularity of color on television, which the advertiser could use in his decision about colorcasting his commercials, is taken to mean advertising research. This definition includes research done by networks, agencies, independent corportations and advertisers, and does not preclude studies pertaining to color program or network impact as well as that of advertising.

A "heavily influential" research role is loosely defined as indicating that in a majority of cases, advertiser decisions to colorcast or retain non-color production, were based on findings in the advertising research.

Evidence and Assumptions

Evidence regarding the use of research by advertisers was taken from both primary and secondary sources. Memoranda and client newsletters from a diverse group of advertising agencies were assumed to reflect the attitudes of advertisers as well as the concerns of the influential agency behind the client decisions.[17] Various advertiser interviews from the trade press supplemented this primary data.

Many industry trend and issue perspectives were presented in the business periodicals and trade journals. These opinions, predictions, cost and audience figures, and advertising data were carefully cross-referenced for consensus to eliminate obscure biases not representative of the general industry mood.

All sources were assumed to adequately reflect the activity, perspectives, and concerns of the period under study and the audience for whom the information was intended. In addition, a high activity level was inferred from the multitude of articles and agency documents headlined "Color TV" from 1961 to 1967.

Access to original NBC and Schwerin research reports verified agency and trade documentation of the data. Biases of these primary sources, while they affected interpretation of the hypothesis, are noted where appropriate. The attitudes and biases of advertisers and their agencies regarding color research, inherent in interdepartmental memoranda and personal interviews, are of great interest and cannot be subdued.

The sources, admittedly, are not exhaustive. It is assumed, however, that unaccessible proprietary data would not significantly alter the conclusions.

SETTING THE SCENE

> Color TV is probably the greatest communications achievement since Gutenberg invented movable type. It is the hottest thing to hit the advertising industry in the 20th century. It is one of the greatest boosts to the U.S. economy since the invention of the automobile, and represents an industry in the billion-dollar brackets.[18]

That was the prognosis by a leading chronicler of color television progress, Sponsor. Though color TV was the hottest thing in the communications industry in 1967, its ascent to such popularity was a decade in coming and costly to its few loyal supporters. The factors that led to the 1961 to 1967 growth period are many and most likely interrelated.

The technical features of the color receiver had matured to where maintenance headaches--repair and color distortion--were minimal. As one manufacturer put it, "We had sets in 1952, 1953 and 1954, but I didn't think they were the kind of thing to market without sending an engineer to live with the customer."[19] Nineteen sixty-five color set service was identical to that of monochrome sets.[20]

Consumers, after having a black and white TV for ten years, were entering the TV replacement market. Although the price differential between monochrome and color sets remained, consumers were more willingly upgrading their black and white sets for color. Color receivers, once called the "rich man's toy,"[21] were affordable to more people relative to color's first years on the market, due partly to technical improvements. RCA's original 1955 color receiver cost $895 and $995, cost $495 in 1963, and by 1965 could be purchased for under $400.[22]

NBC continued increasing its color program offering every season after color's introduction. However, manufacturers agreed that the low amount of color programming remained a problem. Without ABC and CBS producing color

alongside NBC, the great mass of viewers had little incentive to buy a color set. An executive at Westinghouse, for instance, felt that a greater relationship existed between program availability and set sales than between price and set sales.[23] The Consumers Union of the United States, in their 1963 Consumers Report, advised against investing even $400 in a receiver without first evaluating the amount of color programming with the money spent.[24]

An overall color consciousness had begun to spread at the turn of the decade. Awareness and word-of-mouth promotion of color had begun to seep into black and white homes, raising the consumer curiosity, color status and the desirability of color sets. Salesmen, who were now more highly trained, were more persuasively selling the excitement of color.

All these factors set the scene just prior to the great growth period. Yet, that growth cannot necessarily be attributed to these factors alone. Industry research had been gaining momentum in the late 1950's and was on the rise just when color was about to breakthrough.

RESEARCH 1956-1966

Advertising research on color impact and usage patterns, dates back to 1956 when NBC and Batten, Burton, Durstine & Osborn (BBD&O) cooperated in the Colortown Study.[25] However, Schwerin's 1956 and 1957 studies are cited more often as the first research showing that color was better like than black and white and that it had increased recall and selling power.[26]

Two major research projects, undertaken in 1959, were the Cincinnati Study for Crosley Broadcasting Corporation by Burke Research and the Trendex Five-City Study sponsored by the three networks. The Crosley Cincinnati Study of January, gave color programs a 109% average rating advantage over the same programs in black and white. The Five-City Study, one of the earlier

studies most cited, reported that of all TV homes color programs had a 102% average rating advantage over black and white programs.[27]

The Burke Impact Studies of May 1960 and January 1961 tested a color commercial's impact in a full color environment (color commercial on a color program) and in a partial color environment (color commercial on a monochrome show), respectively. Color TV owners were found to watch twelve percent more television than non-color TV owners. For the full color situation, this meant that the TV usage of one thousand color homes was equivalent to that of 3,589 black and white homes, with double ratings for all color shows. Color commercials showed an eighty-three percent advantage over black and white commercials, with thirty-four percent greater recall.

In the partial color environment, the differential between black and white and color was only half that of the full color setting. Still, the research showed a thirty-two percent rating advantage and a fifteen percent greater recall ability. In this study, too, color maintained the extra rating point above the other two networks.[28]

In May of 1962, the American Research Bureau (ARB) conducted ratings research of color programming on KMTV in Omaha. Their results indicated that color programs had an eighty-two percent advantage over the same program in black and white, like the research findings before it.[29]

The November 1964 NBC National Color Study, also conducted by the ARB, documented color's audience power, and heralded NBC's supremacy as the only color network. NBC outperformed the CBS and ABC combined audience by commanding seventy percent of all color viewing with a 165% advantage. Fourteen of the top fifteen shows were NBC-affiliated, and the study showed that audience loyalty carried over to the black and white programming as well, giving NBC a thirty-six percent larger audience than the other two networks. NBC led

the ratings on daytime television, Saturday children's programming, and sports broadcasts. In a competitive system where network prestige is related to ratings, NBC was a least one rating point ahead of the other networks (+500,000 homes) because of its color. However, this study also showed, for the first time, a marked decrease in viewership by those who had owned color longer. Apparently, the excitement of color diminished with time.[30]

In June 1965, NBC conducted a special overnight Trendex study of the Gemini IV lift-off, yielding that following results: color homes had a twenty-two percent higher set usage than monochrome homes, and thirty-seven percent more of all homes tuned in to NBC for the launching than to the other networks. This gave NBC an eighty-eight percent color advantage and a greater than one point lead in the ratings for that particular time spot (+600,000 homes).[31]

The findings from a special TV-Q study for NBC in 1965 confirmed the overwhelming popularity of NBC color shows and the carryover effect to their black and white shows. NBC's overall prime time line-up rated thirty-three percent higher than the other network line-ups, fifty-five percent higher among young adults.[32]

ABC and NBC cooperated in 1965 to do a study over twenty-six cities comparing color to black and white. It basically repeated the Five-City Trendex Study of 1959, except for the larger sample and the absence of CBS as a sponsor. This research showed usage to be twenty-seven percent higher in color homes than in non-color homes. NBC again took the lead in the ratings, having all the top shows on their network. When the three networks broadcast color simultaneously, the advantage of any one network had over the monochrome counterpart, was dispersed as follows: NBC, +74%; CBS, +9%; and ABC, +6%.[33]

The Association of National Advertisers (ANA) hired Gallup and Robinson, Inc. in 1965 to study the relative effectiveness of color and black and white commercials. The study, published in a booklet, Are Color TV Commercials Worth the Extra Cost?, found that a full color setting did fifty-five percent better than a full black and white setting (black and white commercial on a black and white show). However, a partial black and white environment was not better or worse than a full black and white environment. When accounting for the minority of color homes as a proportion of all TV homes, the net gain for color commercials nationwide was only five percent. The study stated that this "may not give color communication the differential an advertiser needs to warrant shifting at this time."[34]

A. C. Nielsen reported color data in 1966 for NBC which showed that NBC still had a thirty-three percent advantage over CBS and a forty-eight percent advantage over ABC, even when all three were broadcasting in color. Of the top fifteen programs, NBC retained thirteen and tied with CBS for a fourteenth.[35]

Brand Rating Index Reports were published every year, starting in the mid-sixties, showing audience characteristics and usage patterns. The 1965 and 1966 Reports, for instance, both estimated the color TV owner to have a forty-seven percent higher median income than the general population; to have larger families, to be in the twenty-five to forty-nine age bracket; to have more formal education than the overall population; and to watch more television than non-color owners.[36]

A recap of several of the major studies which showed color's rating advantage over black and white's can be found in Appendix A.

A PERCEIVED SHORTAGE

After the research brief just given, it would seem ironic that the industry would say that no research existed, but it did. Agency memoranda, industry newsletters and advertisers themselves cited a lack of research on TV color in the 1960's.[37] In 1966, a Colgate-Palmolive executive lamented that "...not much in the way of color research" was available.[38] Sponsor Magazine broadly acknowledged that "all advertisers" were at a loss of definitive knowledge on color effectiveness.[39] Although many knew judgmentally that color increased the appeal of a product, they did not seem to know this from the research.

A 1966 special color report referred to the 1966 ANA study as one of the first on color effectiveness[40]; another 1965 article spoke of the Nielsen color data as showing "actually for the first time" how color homes raised network ratings.[41] In both cases, the studies cited were not the first, but the most current in a long line of research on effectiveness and ratings.

As color became a reality, the industry was still unresolved, or at least felt unresolved, on many questions about TV color.

> When asked whether color commercials (were) more effective than black and white, 68 percent of the agency production directors said 'yes'; a whopping 93 percent of company advertising executives concurred--but admen did not seem to have any idea of how much more effective they were.[42]

Thirty-six percent of the sample said they could not even come close to guessing color's relative effectiveness. This was in 1967. One research company expressed surprise that so few current facts were available and that no major studies in effectiveness had been attempted as of 1967.[43]

INCREASED RESEARCH INTEREST

That the perceived shortage of research was paralleled by a perceived need and strong interest in research is not surprising. Changing industry conditions brought new problems and new uncertainties. As color gained in the networks, questions arose as to its relative impact when all three networks were color broadcasting. Questions about the relative effectiveness of non-color spots in color backgrounds were also raised. A Sponsor survey found that fifty percent of the agencies thought the black and white contrast might become more effective than color in an all-color environment.[44] NBC's Nancy Salkin felt that monochrome commercials on a color show might stand out negatively and convey a "chintzy" image to the black and white sponsor.[45]

Advertising research began to surge in every direction at once.[46] Admen and agencies were grasping for any research they could find. Eleven out of the twenty top agencies admitted they had begun doing their own research, while advertisers, too, began doing individual research on their products. According to the trade press, the research cram that had started in the 1960's was expected to intensify between 1964 and 1966.[47] Much of the research done in these frantic times was kept proprietary within the agency or company for which they were conducted.

RESEARCH IN DECISION-MAKING

The extreme concern about the lack of research and the attempts to fill that void would seem to support the hypothesis that research had played an important role in advertiser decision-making. However, the rest of the data does not concur. After all the research hubbub, when the actual decision to colorcast was made, research apparently did not influence the decision very much. For instance, as a representative advertiser comment from the

trade press, one advertiser had remarked that when Procter and Gamble finally converted to color, his company would also.[48] Many advertisers were playing this same kind of game, waiting until color was a sure thing. To many sponsors, color effectiveness studies were considered just a waste of time.[49] A surprising number claimed in 1963 that they had not even attempted to verify or evaluate the response to color advertising, saying it was "obvious."[50] Schwerin Research Corporation, in its 1965 bulletin, admonished advertisers for such apathy, noting that "pretesting of color commercials is still a drop in the research bucket."[51] Still others in adverting management suggested that "commercial effectiveness often (could not) be determined by research," recounting campaigns which were successful despite research findings to the contrary.[52]

Another indication that research was not being used, was that despite research saying foods benefited from color because of its enhancement of appetite appeal, very few food advertisers were sponsoring advertising in color.[53] Schwerin made this observation as well. The Schwerin Bulletin called it a paradox that the products which stood to gain the most from color advertising, as proven by research reports, were experimenting the very least in color production. Those products included fabrics and cosmetics along with foods.[54] As a case in point, General Foods did not enter the color arean until late 1965.[55]

If research, then, was not heavily influencing the advertiser decision process, a legitimate question might be on what basis were these decisions being made?

DECISION GUIDELINES

The research revealed five major reasons sponsors were deciding on color: (1) for the product appeal, (2) because of the audience composition, (3) to gain color experience, (4) because competitors necessitated it, and (5) just because they liked color.

1. Product Appeal

In many instances, advertisers went color purely on the rationale that color seemed right for the product. Many of the pioneers in color advertising used this strategy at a time when research was practically non-existent. They felt that color enhanced product appeal by showing off an important product characteristic, or that it added another dimension--a depth of reality--to their commercials.

Automobile manufacturers had been long supporters of color. Ford, Chevrolet, Chrysler, Studebaker and General Motors used color primarily for its emphasis on styling. "We know for a fact styling is an important motivation for buying a new car, and color adds an ingredient which is worth considering."[56]

Food companies, too, recognized the appeal color created for their products, although they were slow to take advantage of its benefits. Kraft and General Mills, however, had been experimenting with color since the 1950's,[57] Welch's Grape Juice explicitly requested color of their agency.[58] Schweigert meats, a local Minneapolis meat company, was immediately sold on color upon seeing one color commercial.

Manufacturers also recognized color's enhancement of packaging, in much the same way as they had styling and appetite appeals. Kroger Company used color because it felt its packages were more memorable and appealing than without it.[60] In fact, packaging companies received a great boost during this

color growth phase due to many advertisers redesigning their packaging and corporate images to take full advantage of color TV.

The tobacco industry had also been a stout leader in color development. Color seemed to create a mood for a cigarette campaign. For instance, Salem's "menthol fresh" theme lent itself perfectly to color for this reason.[62]

Color had even lent itself to the product development of some advertisers. Bell Telephone System started offering phones in various colors in 1955 to increase extension usage. Bell included color commercials as an important part of its overall promotional strategy. Bell also used color for its corporate advertising because it added "authenticity" to the science and development themes they were trying to convey.[63] Another campaign that was a natural for color was E. I. Dupont & De Nemours' Teflon. When it started producing teflon finishes of numerous colors in 1964, most teflon companies immediately began producing their commercials in color to emphasize the new product attribute.[64]

Encyclopedia Britannica,[65] Armstrong Cork, Clairol of Bristol-Myers, and Hallmark all stood by color because their products "depended on it."[66]

Several advertising agencies used the product as a main guideline in deciding the color question for their clients. BBD&O, for example, refused to use color as a crutch. Instead, the agency made the decision on a product-by-product or brand-by-brand basis, producing color commercials only for those products for which color seemed appropriate.[67]

2. Audience Composition

When the very first audience data came back on color television owners, corporate and prestige advertisers were impressed with the upscale audience who would receive the color commercials. Even without research documentation,

the image of color as a rich man's toy presented an image of an upscale audience. This population segment was categorized as higher income households who shopped supermarkets moreoften and were good car prospects.[68] American Telephone and Telegraph Company, Corning Glass, Douglas Fir Plywood Association, Reynolds Metals, Shell, Wheeling Steel, and Hallmark--all leading corporate advertisers--were among the first early supporters of color, simply because of the potential audience.[69] RCA, Ford,Chrysler, Chevrolet and Smith Kline & French also thought this audience was more suited to their message.[70]

On the flip side, Rheingold beer, a regional beer distributor, refused to buy color because of the audience. "Color TV set owners are the martini and scotch-and-soda drinkers . . ."![71]

3. Color Experience

Color production imposes higher standards and less flexibility on the advertiser who uses it. Lighting factors, camera sensitivity to minor gradations in colors and surface textures, the adequacy of costumes, backdrops and scenery previously used--all were problems with which the new color advertiser needed to experiment to avoid set flashiness and overcrowding. Schwerin cautioned in its 1965 bulletin that "those in the industry who expect to make a switch-over from monochrome as a matter of course will be in for a disillusioned awakening."[72] A sponsor lauded the value of color experimentation early in the game:

> Anybody who's going on the premise that he'll jump aboard when it gets rolling had better take another look. He's likely to wake up one morning and find color has arrived for him . . . And, if this does happen, he'll find out there's a lot to learn about.[73]

Colgate-Palmolive went from twenty-five percent color in 1965 to eighty-five percent color in 1966, saying it did not want to be caught short when color really arrived.[74]

Procter and Gamble, Revlon and Lever Bros. made baby steps towards color, but lack of color daytime programming, where most of their advertising dollars were scheduled, held them back. These advertisers allocated a small portion of their advertising budget to color just for the sake of gaining valuable experience with the new techniques.[75] Actually, these new techniques gave advertising a "shot of creativity."[76] Agencies, too, concerned about gaining experience, worked with broadcasters to develop the new color medium.[77]

4. Competitive Parity

If your competitors have color, you better have color. That was the extent of the decision process for many advertisers who purposely avoided the decision and the expense of color until forced by their competitors or the networks to join the color ranks. "Let's watch it a while longer" was the standard evasion.[78]

However, copying a competitor's moves without knowing the competitor's strategy was potentially dangerous. The advertiser who was waiting for Procter and Gamble to go color may have had no reason to wait had it not been bound to daytime scheduling like P&G. Also, failing to get early experience in the color medium, and beating competitors in the mastery of color techniques, could have been a costly mistake.

Competitive parity initiated color sponsorship, too. Once some of the larger prestige advertisers were into color production, the pressure to belong to the "color club" became a decision-making reality to many.[79] The risk that one's black and white commercials might look chintzy next to those in color was a competitive issue that often guided advertiser policy.

5. They Liked It!

Local retailers did not seem to care as much about quality of production as did the national advertisers. They entered the color market because they liked color. Wherever stations were equipped to shoot and broadcast live color, color commercial production boomed. To some extent, this decision criteria of liking it existed at the national level, too.

Local beer distributors, auto dealers, supermarkets, department stores, utilities, banks, insurance companies, meat packers, jewelry stores and bakeries swarmed to color, regardless of their product.[80] Banks felt color brightened an otherwise drab commercial. A bakery which normally sold four to five cakes a week, advertised in color and sold 140 cakes within the week. Buddies Supermarket in Texas, sold 243,000 pounds of watermelon by advertising in color.[81] Many of these retailers had never advertised on television before and were amazed at the success. Their stories drew more advertisers to the new medium. The stir at the local level helped spread conversion to color by stations without color capabilities who, upon seeing the success of competing color equipped stations, equipped themselves to broadcast color, too.

In Broadcasting's special 1966 color report, it cited that, "Above and beyond any reason cited for the color breakthrough (was) one that seems particularly significant: the clients (wanted) color."[82]

CONCLUSIONS

Investigation of the research role in the sponsor colorcasting decision found the original hypothesis to be erroneous; advertising research did not heavily influence the sponsors' decisions to go color from 1961 to 1967. The study, however, brought to light some worthwhile observations.

Research seems to have been almost synonymous with uncertainty. When color appeared to be near the verge of a breakthrough, advertisers were faced with the task of deciphering color's next move. Color's history had been one of many predictions and postponements and there had been little agreement as to its true arrival date in the industry.[83] According to their calculations, then, it was necessary to adjust their promotional strategies to their anticipations. The greater the uncertainty in making clearcut decisions on these factors, the greater the perceived need for quantitative research answers.

As color became a more pressing issue, advertisers looked for guarantees that an investment in color would be profitable. The available research, although thoroughly documenting color's advantage, was perceived by unconfident sponsors to be too scanty to make such guarantees, and the perceived need for advertising research grew greater. Such dissonance created an industry-wide panic for research. Research was increasingly missed, called for, discussed and even conducted. Everywhere everyone demanded and conducted his own private hoard of impact studies with which to come to his own secret answers.

However, when the time came at last to decide, sometimes much more quickly than expected, the decision seemed to be made without the benefit or guidance of research. Instead, advertisers relied on subjective decision criteria or their neighbor to come to their final conclusion. Although research may have played a minor role in orienting industry thoughts on color, it was forgotten in the rush of business and survival.

That advertising research was not used very much by advertisers might have been due to the perceived unreliability or bias of the published research reports. NBC sponsored a large portion of the research and used these reports as public relations vehicles. Such flagrant and frequent braggery may have damaged advertiser faith in the results and diminished their influence.

BEYOND THE HYPOTHESIS

The circular problem that color faced in its early developmental years remains unsolved. This research has shed light onto the situation, however, and has begun to unwind the mystery behind the chicken-or-the-egg syndrome. For whatever reason advertisers decided to colorcast their commercials, advertisers did begin to support the expense of programming and the color medium. NBC's list of advertisers greatly increased throughout the growth period. (See Appendix B for a partial listing of sponsors.)

ABC and especially CBS, contented themselves by waiting before they went color because they felt the "advertiser was not yet ready to make color a paying proposition."[84] During that time, the hesitant networks and stations dampened consumer incentive to buy television sets because of the programming depravity. CBS monitored NBC's color volume[85] and had access to the ratings research that showed NBC's lead. It did not, however, use these findings to justify color conversion.

When Armstrong Cork, a major CBS sponsor, cancelled its showing on that network and scheduled advertising on NBC's color network,[86] when it became obvious that Kodak, the National Auto Association, Shell and others had gone to NBC because of its color programming, and that Kraft, Hallmark and AT&T stayed at NBC because of its continued support of color,[87] when it was noticeable that NBC had all the major automobile and corporate advertisers signed up,

CBS began to reconsider its staunch no-color policy. When NBC announced that its 1965 fall schedule would be ninety-six percent color, CBS and ABC were forced to color by the threatened and actual loss of advertisers.[88]

CBS's shift to color after its long holdout, acted as a psychological lift to advertisers and consumers alike, who believed it was a symbolic indication that color had really arrived.[89] As the networks converted to color, sponsors found themselves with little choice of whether to colorcast or not. It became a competitive necessity for the remaining non-color advertisers to convert to color.

And the color wheel rolled and rolled and rolled . . . .

NOTES

[1] Gene F. Seehafer an Jack W. Laemmar, Successful Television and Radio Advertising, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1959), 108.

[2] "The Costs of Coloring a Television Station," Broadcasting (January 2, 1967): 44.

[3] National Broadcasting Company, NBC Research Bulletin #287, September 1965.

[4] "Sponsors Leap Now, Meet Problems Later," Sponsor 20 (February 21, 1966): 78.

[5] NBC, NBC Research Bulletin #295, July 25, 1966.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Daniel E. Garvey, "Introducing Color Television: The Audience and Programming Problems," Job 24 (Fall 1980): 517-25.

[8] "Color TV: Poised for Breakthrough?" Printer's Ink 279 (June 8, 1962): 22; Garvey, "Introducing Color," p. 515.

[9] Kaatz, Chicago, Illinois: Crain Books, 1982, p.54; "The First 50 Years of Broadcasting," Broadcasting 100 (March 30, 1981), 78.

[10] "Color TV: Poised?" p. 21.

[11] Broadcasting Yearbook 1978 (Broadcasting Publications, Inc., 1978): B-175.

[12] NBC, NBC Special Announcement, press release, June 1965

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid., NBC scheduled 96% color, CBS - 56% color, and ABC 48% color.

[15] "Color is a Must in 1967 Television," Broadcasting 72 (January 2, 1967): 40, 43.

[16] "Color TV: Poised?" p. 21.

[17] Agency reports were used from the following advertising agencies: Batten, Barton, Durstine & Osborn; Leo Burnett Company; Doyle, Dane Bernbach; D'arcy Advertising Company; Foote, Cone & Belding; Kenyon & Eckhardt: Sullivan, Stauffer, Colwell & Bayles; Young & Rubicam.

[18]"Color: Madison Avenue Take a Hard Look," Sponsor 21 (February 6, 1967): 42.

[19]"Color TV Set Makers Turn Sales Volume Up," Business Week (January 23, 1965): 146.

[20]Ibid.

[21]"Color: Madison Looks," p. 90.

[22]Ibid.

[23]"Color TV Set Makers," p. 146.

[24]"Color: Madison Looks," p. 91.

[25]Leo Burnett Company, Agency Report, July 1963, p. 1.

[26]Schwerin Research Corporation, Schwerin Research Bulletin (New York: Schwerin Research Corporation, April 1965): 1-6.

[27]Leo Burnett Company, p. 2; NBC, Close-Up on Color Television (New York: NBC, 1965): 42, 43.

[28]Ibid., p. 2-4; Ibid., p. 45, 48-52.

[29]NBC, Close-Up, p. 46-7.

[30]NBC, NBC Research Bulletin #272, March 4, 1965.

[31]NBC, Report from TV Sales Planning Division, June 25, 1965.

[32]NBC, NBC Research Bulletin #285, August 10, 1965.

[33]NBC, NBC Research Bulletin #288, November 1, 1965.

[34]NBC, NBC Research Bulletin #291, February 3, 1966; also, Gallup & Robinson, Are Color TV Commercials Worth the Extra Cost? (New York: Association of National Advertisers, December 1965).

[35]NBC, NBC The Leading Network Among Color Homes (A. C. Nielsen: 1966).

[36]NBC, NBC Research Bulletin #278, May 21, 1965; also, NBC Research Bulletin #295, June 25, 1966.

[37]Burnett, Leo Company, "Color Television--1965," Agency report (Chicago: April 1965): 3.

[38]"Sponsors Leap," p. 68.

[39]Ibid., p. 66.

[40]"Out of the Egg With a Bang," Broadcasting 70 (January 3, 1966): 104.

[41]"Color: The Billion Dollar Market in '65," Sponsor 19 (January 25, 1965): 32.

[42]"Sponsors View Color--With Realism," Sponsor 21 (February 6, 1967): 52.

[43]Ibid., p. 55.

[44]Ibid., p. 52.

[45]"Sponsors Leap," p. 82.

[46]Ibid, p. 76.

[47]"Out of the Egg," p. 32.

[48]"Color is a Must," p. 40.

[49]"Sponsors Leap," p. 56.

[50]"Who's Behind Color TV, and Why?" Printer's Ink 279 (June 15, 1962): 25.

[51]Schwerin, p. 2.

[52]"A Long Look at Color by 4A's," Broadcasting 18 (November 1, 1965): 36.

[53]"Sponsors Leap," p. 66.

[54]Schwerin, p. 2.

[55]"Sponsors Leap," p. 66.

[56]"Who's Behind Color?" p. 24.

[57]Sponsors Leap," p. 68.

[58]James N. Harvey, "Color TV Tantalizes the Taste Buds," Sponsor 19 (February 1, 1965): 48.

[59]"Sponsors View Color," p. 53.

[60]"Sponsors Leap," p. 68.

[61]"Sponsors View Color, p. 52.

[62]"Who's Behind Color?" p. 25.

[63]Ibid.

[64]"Out of the Egg," p. 54.

[65]"Color is a Must," p. 34

[66]"Sponsors Leap," p. 68.

[67]Batten, Barton, Burstine & Osborn, "Color Television," Agency report (New York: May 1965): 6.

[68]NBC, NBC Research Bulletins #278 and #295.

[69]"Sponsors Leap," p. 66.

[70]Leo Burnett Company, agency report, July 1963, p.1.

[71]"Sponsors Leap," p. 69.

[72]Schwerin, p. 2.

[73]"Who's Behind Color?" p. 26.

[74]"Sponsors Leap," p. 68.

[75]Ibid., p. 69.

[76]"Color: Madison Looks," p. 42.

[77]"Who's Behind Color?" p. 26.

[78]"Color: Television's Elusive Tomorrow," Television Magazine 20 (December 1963): 44.

[79]"Out of the Egg," p. 54.

[80]"Sponsors Leap," p. 72.

[81]Ibid., p. 73.

[82]"Out of the Egg," p. 51; confirmed by personal interview with Ken Jones, Michigan State University, Advertising Department, East Lansing, Michigan, February 9,1983.

[83]"How Soon Will Color Dominate TV?" Broadcasting 68 (January 18, 1965): 31.

[84]"Color TV: Poised?" p. 25.

[85]"Color: Elusive Tomorrow," p. 90.

[86]"Sponsors Leap," p. 68.

[87]"Network Color Programming Expands," Sponsor 16 (December 1962): 36.

[88]"Color TV's Astonishing Boom," Newsweek (March 29, 1965): p. 63.

[89]"Color: Will TV Ads Follow Programs to Tint?" Printer's Ink 290 (April 9 1965): 29.

APPENDIX A

Color Advantage of Four Major Studies

Color Advantage	109%		102%		83%		82%	
Ratings	23	47	42	85	24	44	22	40
	BW	Color	BW	Color	BW	Color	BW	Color
	Crosley Cinci Jan 1959		Trendex 5-City Mar 1959		Crosley Cinci May 1960		ARB Omaha May 1962	

APPENDIX B

COLOR SPONSORS ON NBC-T

AUTOMOTIVE

1956:
- Ford
- General Motors
- Chrysler

1960:
- Ford
- General Motors
  - Chevrolet
- Chrysler
- Johnson Motors
- Studebaker

1964:
- Ford
- General Motors
  - Chevrolet
  - Buick
  - Pontiac
- Chrysler
- Firestone
- Esso--Humble Oil
- Goodrich Tires
- Gulf

1966:
- American Motors
- Ford
- General Motors
  - Chevrolet
  - Buick
  - Pontiac
- Chrysler
- Firestone
- Goodyear Tires
- Hertz
- Kaiser Jeep
- Prestone
- Simonitz
- Volkswagon
- Zerex

CIGARETTE COMPANIES

1956:
- Liggett & Myers

1960:
- American Tobacco
- Bayuk
- Liggett & Myers
- P. Lorillard
- U.S. Tobacco

1964:
- American Tobacco
  - Carlton
  - Montclair
  - Lucky Strike
  - Pall Mall
- Continental Cigar
- General Cigar--White Owl
- Liggett & Myers
- P. Lorillard
  - Kent
  - Newport
- Reynolds
  - Camels
  - Salem
- Winston

1966:
- American Tobacco
  - Carlton
  - Montclair
  - Lucky Strike
  - Pall Mall
- Consolidated Cigar
- Continental Cigar
- General Cigar--White Owl
- Liggett & Myers
- P. Lorillard
  - Kent
  - Newport
- Reynolds
  - Camels
  - Salem
- Half & Half Filters
- Kent
- Kools
- Lark
- L&M
- Old Gold
- Tareyton
- Tempo
- Winston